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ABSTRACT

Based on experience gained from helping secondary students produce numerous puppet shows for children, this paper provides a step-by-step guide to the production of puppet plays by secondary students. Following sections that tell about puppeteering and about different kinds of puppets, separate sections of the paper offer suggestions in the following areas: forming a basic concept of what a puppet production should be: writing a puppet play script: staging a puppet play: designing a puppet: making puppets from such materials as papier-mache, plastic wood, wood, clay, liquid rubber, cloth, and fake fur, and stringing marionettes: organizing a puppet production: and overcoming problems in putting on the production. The paper concludes with lists of objectives and review questions for each section. Several illustrations are included to demonstrate steps in making puppets. (GT)

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Puppet Productions in the Schools

By

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Preface

The general type of books available on the subject of puppetry in the schools are addressed to the elementary school level, or are historical presentations. Little attention has been given to the secondary school or how to actually organize and produce a quality puppet play.

Bill Baird in his book, The Art of the Puppet, gives a very fine history of the puppet from primitive to the present day. His book is an excellent resource for any puppeteer. It is not necessary in this text to repeat his efforts.

This text shall be more concerned with the actual producing of a puppet play by secondary students, and how the total effort may be planned carefully to insure a quality puppet production.

I do not intend to leave the impression that I am a professional puppeteer. I am simply an art teacher who has a keen interest in puppetry and who has, with my students, produced fourteen different puppet shows having audiences totaling about 2,000 children each show.

The methods described here have been tried and tested with secondary school students and should help considerably in productions in the public schools. It is my honest desire to share with you these experiences so you may learn easily what took me nearly ten years to learn.

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I. Introduction

To see a puppet show excite an audience, while entertaining or teaching, is a grand experience, but to know what is involved in making the total puppet production happen makes it even more of an experience to appreciate and enjoy.

To say that young children feel puppets possess a magical quality is to understate the case, one only has to look at the gleaming eyes and smiling faces of the young audience to realize this.

But what makes a good puppet show? Does dangling a puppet in front of children, in its self, make a good show, or is it found in careful planning and practice? Anyone who has seen a poor puppet show must agree with the later statement, for surely the poorly planned show left much to be desired.

Can secondary school students compete against standards that are set by professional puppeteers and seen by millions of T.V. viewers? What techniques are possible within limited school budgets? Within this text, perhaps there are answers to these and many other questions.

Puppetry is not only an excellent project in itself but also by charging a slight admission at the elementary schools, it is a project which can pay for itself and even make a profit.

II. What Is A Puppet? Puppeteer? Puppet Show?

According to Webster a puppet is defined as "1. a small figure, humanlike in form; doll. 2. such a figure moved by strings, wires, or the hands, in a puppet show..." Webster defines a puppeteer as, "a person who operates puppets or produces puppet shows."

While the definition of a puppeteer is quite adequate, the definition of a puppet leaves much to be desired. In a time in which we see monsters, frogs, ducks, and many other figures as popular as puppets, it is unrealistic to contain our definition of a puppet to the human form. In many cases, things are used to manipulate puppets other than hands, wires, or strings. Disney's antomated characters in Disney Land are in every respect puppets, but the large size, type of characters, and sophistication of the antomated controls defie our definition. We must conclude then, that a puppet may be whatever the puppeteer decides it may be.

Webster defines a puppet show as, "a performance with puppets." This definition will do nicely if we accept our premise that a puppet may be whatever the puppeteer decides it may be. A term used more often today because of the greater scope of contemporary productions is the "puppet play." The puppet play simply brings to mind the use of many elements of the stage play, such as backgrounds, staging, lighting, dramatic effects, and other elements common to the stage play.

III. Different Kinds of Puppets

There are many types of puppets, but for our use in the schools we shall divide these into five groups: the hand puppet, the rod puppet, the string marionette, live actors in costume, and shadow puppets.

The hand puppet may be fitted on the hand and is operated by movement of the arm, hand, and fingers. The classical example of this puppet is "Punch and Judy."

The rod puppet is so named because of the rods used to control the hands and arms (or other limbs) which leaves one hand of the puppeteer free to operate the puppet's mouth. An example of this is the very popular Sesame Street rod puppets.

The string marionettes are puppets whose actions are controled or manipulated by the use of strings. A classical example of this is the T.V. marionette "Howdy Doody."

Live actors in costume. It is hard to draw the line in this area. When is an actor an actor, and when is he a part of what is recognized as a puppet? I have seen jack-in-the-box characters which are definately puppets manipulated by people inside the characters, and a snow man, which was by all rights a puppet, which was a costume worn by a young man. Who is to say that these are not puppets? "Big Bird" on Sesame Street is another example of the puppet controled from within.

Other examples of live actors as a part of puppetry involve people putting their hands and heads through material or plywood

and fitting into a costume which may be a puppet's body costume or a small child's costume. The view of the bodies of the actors is blocked by the material or board, allowing the audience to see only the actor's head and hands in the costume. All else is, for all purposes, a puppet. In this case the actor manipulates various actions of the puppet and supliments the action with his own head, facial expressions, and hands.

Shadow puppets are cut out cardboard characters, with controled limbs, which are placed between a bright projection lamp and a rear projection screen. The images cast a shadow on to the screen for the view of the audience. This method is not used much in American puppetry today, but can be used very effectively. I think the very best example of this I have ever seen was of a puppet surgery. The puppet patient and puppet doctor went behind a screen, similar to those in hospitals, and the surgery began. A bright light behind the puppets cast shadows onto the cloth room divider. A saw, knife, needle and thread, as well as parts taken out of the patient, such as a valentine-shaped-heart, were cast as shadows in a most effective manner using this technique.

IV. Where Do We Begin?

A puppet production must begin first with a basic concept of what the production should be. Will it tell a serious story or will it be simply entertaining? Will it be intended for an audience of elementary age children or will it be for an older

audience? Will it be put on in the classroom or will it be produced on stage for a large audience? Will you use existing sound recordings or will you make your own? Will the characters be from classical designs, or will they be of your own design? All these questions and more must be answered, before starting on the script.

It has been my experience that puppetry works best when directed toward elementary age children, or pre-school children. We have done productions for the secondary school level, but trying to fit these programs to both elementary and secondary audiences is much more difficult than it may seem.

Another factor is the puppeteers, (students) themselves. Secondary students enjoy going out to entertain the elementary kids but feel ill-at-ease when facing their peers, even from behind a stage. Never-the-less, if you should decide to do a puppet show for secondary students you should do your best to relate to their interests above all. One of the best puppet shows I have ever seen in the secondary schools had a string marionette in it which did a strip-tease. We have never gone that far, but have used belly-dancer-marionettes which were very sexy in looks and movement. Teenagers also relate to football. A puppet skit relating to their home team versus their arch rival lends itself to a situation for fun. The puppets become small imitations of the coach and outstanding team members personality in the satire.

Teenagers also relate to other things, such as cars, and

rock groups. With a little imagination one can quickly produce a puppet skit involving the racing, repair, or purchase of a car. Rock group recordings can be pantomined with puppets similar to their real counterparts. Teenagers have definite interests which must be taken in to consideration if you plan to do a puppet show for them or else the results may be disasterous.

Puppets may be used to entertain or to teach, the theme may be humorous, dramatic, or serious, whatever suits your purpose. Puppets, as we know them today in America, are for the most part designed to be comical. To look at the puppets of Sesame Street almost brings spontaneous laughter without the puppets doing anything. Many teachers do use puppets as an effective tool to teach a serious message. The show Sesame Street is an excellent example of how effective serious teaching may be accomplished within a comical presentation.

If you are going to give a dramatic serious puppet show, it might be a good idea to make your puppets as realistic looking as possible. The important thing to remember, always, is to use good staging techniques. Movement of the character doing the talking is essential. Nothing can kill a puppet show quicker than a lack of purposeful movement.

If the purpose of your puppet show is to entertain, then the scope of what is possible is limited only by your imagination and budget. Children love to be entertained and love to have their imagination excited. I personally prefer to use

the entertaining approach and find it difficult to present a good serious puppet show, although one of our early puppet shows which was successful contained both comical and serious portions. Perhaps the best way to present a serious puppet show is in conjunction with an entertaining puppet show.

Whether you decide to write your own script or decide to use existing recordings, you will undoubtedly have to make a number of modifications in keeping what is desirable for a good puppet production. Even the best songs, lyrics, or music many times lasts longer than what is desirable in a good puppet production. Action and change are the two most important ingredients of a puppet play.

V. How Do You Write A Puppet Play Script?

Writing a script for a puppet show is much like writing a script for a play, except you must take into consideration the limits of your puppets actions. A rod or hand puppet is confined to the area of its stage, as is also the string marrionette. A string marrionette may rise and fly, while a hand puppet may not do this, except it may be thrown from one side of the stage and caught by someone else on the other side of the stage.

If the puppeteer is actually speaking the part of his puppet during a live performance then timing is not as critical and much may be improvised as the puppeteer relates to his

audience. In such a case the script may have little instructions and little timing controls built in. If a tape recording is used then it may be necessary not only to identify the speaker, but also the action, timing, and any dialogue for each part. You may also wish to include special effects such as, scenery, sound, and lighting.

As already stated, action and change are the two most important ingredients of a puppet play. As the script writer you must realize that sixty seconds of time occupied by one puppet, as the central figure, is an absolute limit. Since the puppeteers you are working with are not professionals, you must rely upon a constant variety of changes and surprises to captivate your audience.

While you plan your script you must also be aware of the problems of the puppeteers moving about. Each puppeteer must have space in which to operate and move about without bumping into other puppeteers. The use of several stages will help to control this problem. A change of action from one stage to another stage will give time for the puppeteers at the first stage to make their changes and get ready for the action to switch back to them.

My students and I, in eight school years, put on fourteen different puppet plays. Each puppet play had six performances and the total audience for each play was about 2,000 children, or a grand total in eight years of about 28,000 viewers.

Over the eight years my students have made a total of about 700 different puppets. I mention this here simply to point out the variety of experiencse we have had in trying to spread a little happiness to elementary children.

Over the years we have found a format for our productions that has seemed to work very well. Our puppet plays would begin with an overture or some appropriate music for (1) the march of the marionettes. This would not include those marionettes we considered outstanding or important characters. The puppet production usually included a total of about fifty puppets but the march of the marionettes might contain only about ten or twelve marionettes. The puppeteers would simply march the marionettes in front of the scenery clockwise and then take the marionettes around behind the scenery and start again from their beginning point. In this manner there was a continuous line of marionettes marching by. After that we would switch the spot light to (2) the hand puppets. This gave us time to change scenery for the marionettes and to get ready as the spot light switches back to (3) the marionettes and back to the hand puppets, (4) back and forth until near the end of the show where we introduced the (5) live actors in costume who passed through the audience at the completion of their skit. Then came the (6) grand finale, which began with the march of the marionettes and expanded to include all the puppets and actors in the production and gave

an impressive finish to the show.

What ever form you decide to use in your puppet play script, the important thing to remember is "your script is the final blue-print for your production." It should include enough information so that each puppeteer, or stage hand will know exactly when, where, and what action is taking place by which puppet or actor, and other related important information.

Once you have completed your script, copies should be given to your puppeteers, stage hands, and actors for tape recording or rehearsal.

VI. How Do You Stage A Puppet Play?

Puppet shows come in all forms and sizes which dictate the necessary props and stages. A puppet show may be as small as a single finger puppet, using only a cloth to drape around the hand, to a large theater production with all the desired stage props, lights, sound equipment, curtains, and a cast of more than a hundred puppets.

In most schools there is not enough money, time, or space available to set up a total theater production as mentioned above. What we must do instead is to "do the very best with what we have to do with."

Stages may be made as simple as cutting a rectangular hole high in a large cardboard box, for classroom stages.

These stages may be painted, decorated, or covered with colored paper. An opening cut on the lower back side of the box will allow the puppeteers access to their hand puppet stage. Stages for marionettes may also be built of this material.

A larger stage may be built of cardborad reinforced with wood strips or of plywood, which is a more costly but more durable material. A larger stage may include more than one hand puppet or one string marionette stage, it may include both stages for marionettes and hand puppets.

Many puppet shows are taken "on the road" from school to school or place to place. This factor may have a great deal to do with the type of scenery and stages desirable for the production. In such a show it may be necessary to have stages which can be set up or taken apart easily. If a school stage is not available your show may be limited to rod or hand puppets. The stages, in such a case, must be tall enough for the entire audience to see the puppets clearly. Small curtains which open and close may also be desirable.

If elevated stages are available you may still choose to construct a puppet stage for string marionettes, hand puppets, and rod puppets. Our first puppet shows used a plywood stage which we placed on the elementary school stages. It also worked well on the gym floor where an elevated audience could look down at it. The design of our stage was such that it could accommodate string marionettes in the center eight

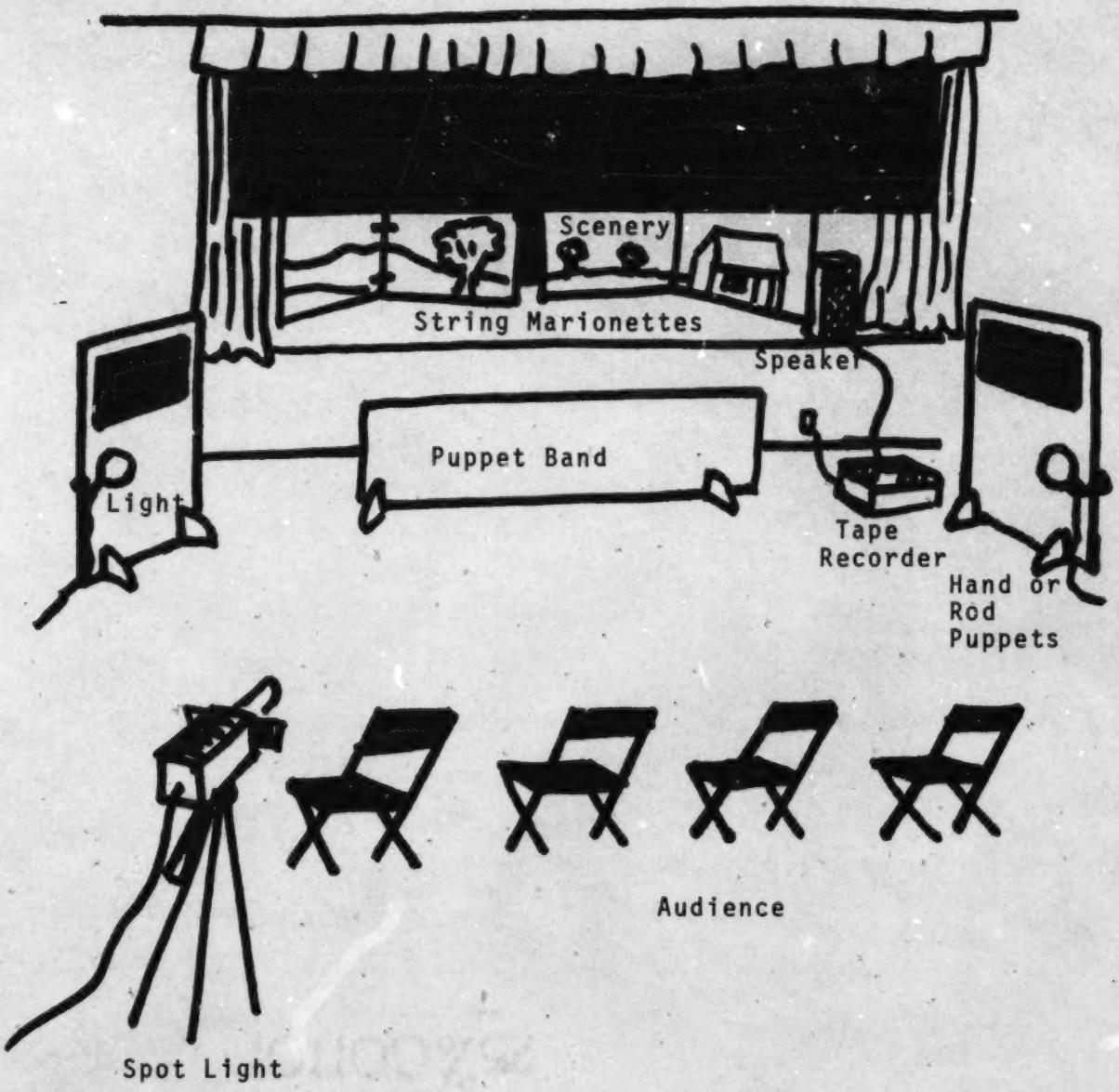
foot long stage, and hand or rod puppets in the four foot wide wings attached on each end of the center stage. The stage floor for the marionettes was elevated about a foot with curtains behind to which we attached scenery. The center stage also had a curtain which would open and close for a change of scenes. The opening for the center stage was only about a foot taller than the height of our marionettes. This design was fully portable but blocked off the audience's view of the puppeteers.

Other puppet stages which are portable and work quiet well are made of tubes or pipes joined together as a frame work on which is draped curtains or cloth and scenery.

When we went to larger puppet productions or puppet plays, we found it necessary to discard our plywood stage and discover some new techniques more in keeping with our new productions.

Our large puppet productions utilized the stages available to us at the elementary schools for our puppet plays. We decided to use the elementary stages for our string marionettes. This was done easily by setting up on stage portable scenery about 36" tall behind which the puppeteers worked their marionettes. The view of the puppeteers by the audience was blocked by simply pinning black material to the curtain material which drapes from the top front of the stage. This staging allowed us to use larger marionettes which much to our surprise were easier to make and operate. We were able to use discarded

USING THE ELEMENTARY STAGE



Live Actors Enter From Rear of Auditorium

children's clothing for many costumes and the strings on the larger marionettes did not tangle us as easily as the smaller marionettes. This type of staging did require the use of a spot light. Since we did not have one, we improvised a slide projector as our spot light and cut holes in cardboard slides for the light patterns desired. The larger marionettes were more professional looking and in general did a great deal to improve our puppet shows.

We then decided to set up the hand and rod puppets in small portable stages in front, and left and right of the elementary school stage. The stages on either side were made of half inch thick, 4' X 6' plywood and were portable. The extra lumber trimmed off of the 4' X 8' sheets was used to make legs or slotted supports to keep the 4' X 6' portion up right. A small curtain was attached to the plywood behind the 18" X 36" stage opening. We found it necessary, to add a small light to the front of each stage instead of depending upon our spot light. This could easily be turned on at the appropriate time by the puppeteers. These stages were decorated or painted according to the theme of our puppet play.

The small stage in front of the elementary school stage was constructed the same height as the school stage floor. This was simply a plywood board to block off the view of the audience of the puppeteers. This stage was for hand or rod puppets, and was usually used as an orchestra pit for a puppet band.

Other small stages were built of cardboard forms such as a jack-in-the-box or a tall building or any other unusual prop needed for special effects. One of the most unusual stages we ever built was an out-house which housed a bear puppet. When the door to the out-house was opened inside was the little bear who played a cigar-box-guitar. Puppet stages are limited only by your imagination. Try thinking of your theater as a small village or wonderland and whatever you want to do in that wonderland is possible, limited only by your imagination and budget.

VII. How Do You Design A Puppet?

Puppet design depends a great deal on the demands of the puppet production placed upon it and the designer. If a puppet is realistic then the designer simply copies nature in minature. Most puppets, however, are cartoon like characters in three dimensional forms. Cartoon characters usually have round or egg shaped heads and bodies. Their designs are usually kept very simple.

The first step is to determine the size and type of puppet you are to make and then do a full size rough drawing of what you feel the puppet should be. Next, look at pictures of as many puppets as you can find that resembles somewhat the design you have started. Look at any other cartoon characters that may give you a clue to the design of your puppet. Review briefly the script for your puppet play and identify your puppet's character in the puppet play.

Is your puppet the cute type like the "Peanuts" characters of Charles Schultz? If so, notice the simplicity of the cute characters in their two to three heads high physical structure. The height of the entire body from the neck down is about equal to that of the height of the head. There is a uniform happy smile, slightly turned up nose, high forehead, and button eyes.

Is your puppet a hero-heroine character type like Al Capp's cartoon characters of Little Abner and Daisy Mae? If so, then notice the near human proportions with exaggerations in those areas considered most masculine or feminine on the appropriate character. In both characters you find a narrow waist. Little Abner has an angular muscular body while Daisy Mae's body has soft gentle curves. Her face has the simplicity of a fashion drawing. Little Abner's face is angular with a squared off chin. The masculine heavy chin helps to give him the look of a hero.

Is your puppet a villain? If so, then he might be clothed in black with a tall black top hat and a dark cape. His back might be hunched, his face may be long with beady eyes and a long black mustache.

Is your puppet a clown? If so, check out as many books as you can on the circus. If your puppet is a railroad engineer then look in books on the railroad. What ever your puppet is to be there are endless resources of ideas for the costumes, and the characters in your public library.

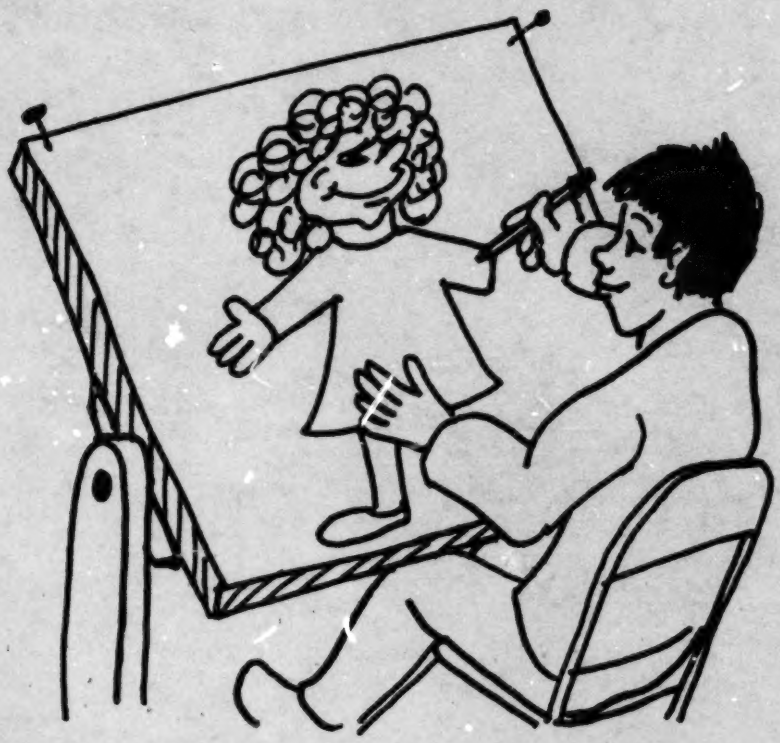
Once you have determined your puppet design then simplify the lines of your puppet drawing. Exaggerate some body parts. A clown may have a big nose while another puppet may have big eyes or a big mouth. Each puppet should be an individual and have some special movement, quality, or action which sets it apart from all other puppets. This movement or action may be the wiggling of ears, rolling of eyes, batting of eye lashes, or any other special quality. One of my students once made a puppet tuba player whose cheeks were holes cut in a paper-mache head through which a red baloon inside the head protruded. These red baloon cheeks expanded or puffed up as the puppeteer squeezed the baloon inside the puppets head. One of the most versitile puppets we ever made was one whose head was made of rubber. Such a puppet can wiggle its ears and nose, move its mouth, and make an infinite variety of facial expressions. We once made a "Rudolph" reindeer whose red nose would light up, and an ostrich who was a ballerina.

Having completed your pencil design the next thing of importance should be adding full color to your design. It is important at this point to remember that puppets are actors to be seen in a spot lighted stage show. Costumes which are bright in color and glitter or reflect light will make a good appearance.

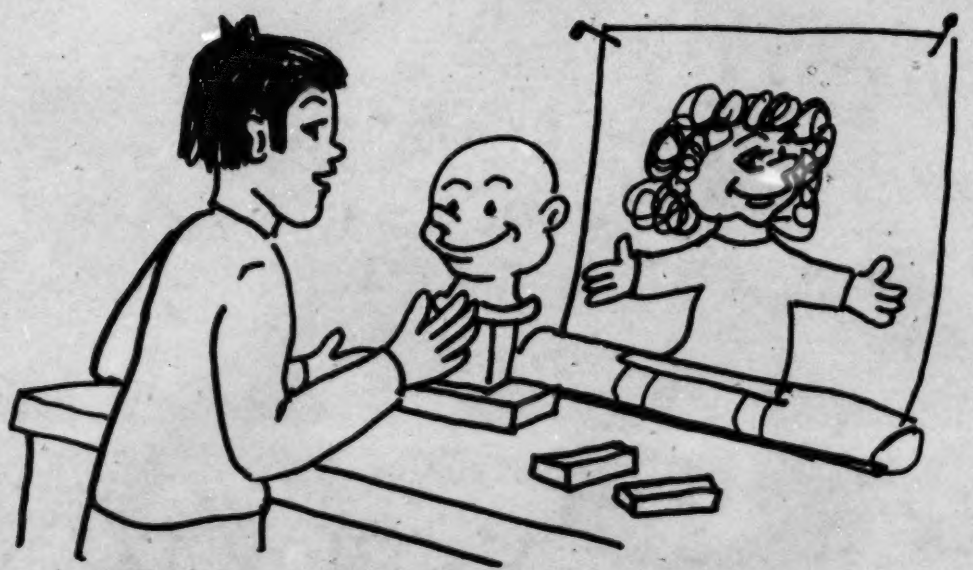
VIII. How Do You Make A Puppet?

There are many different ways of constructing a puppet. Some of the more popular methods include: paper-mache, plastic wood, wood, ceramic, cloth, and fake fur. This chapter will be

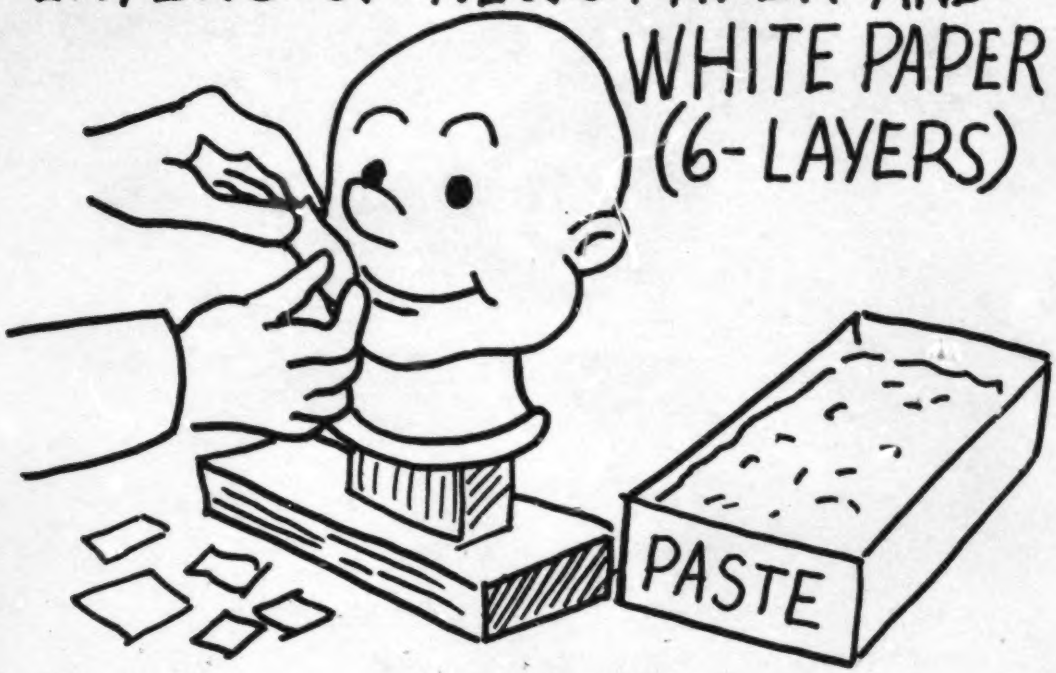
1. DRAW THE PUPPET FULL SIZE



2. MODEL HEAD IN PLASTIC CLAY

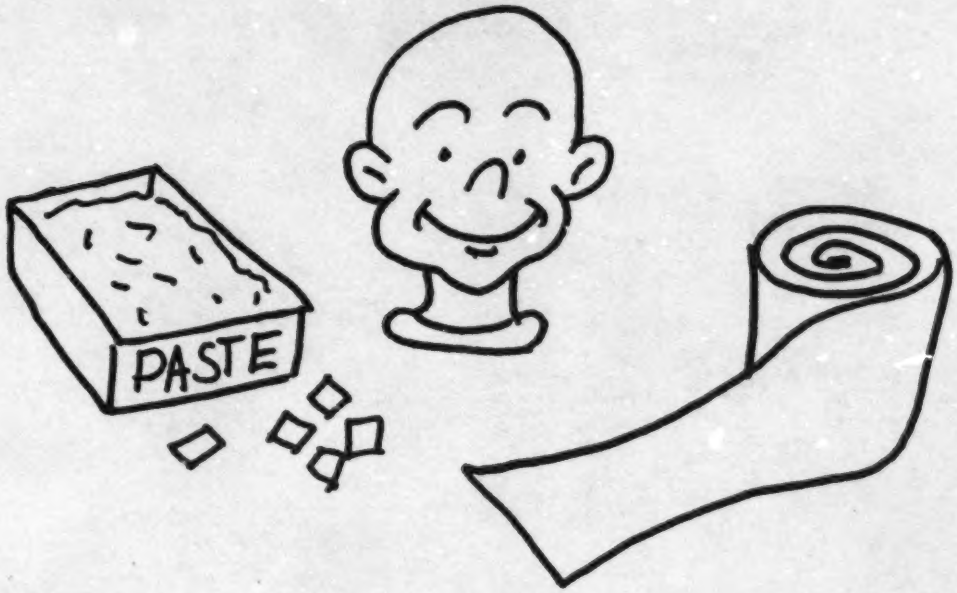


3. PAPER-MACHE USING ALTERNATE LAYERS OF NEWS PAPER AND WHITE PAPER (6-LAYERS)



4. CUT HEAD IN HALF, TAKE OUT CLAY. NEXT, PUT HEAD TOGETHER WITH 4 LAYERS OF PAPER-MACHE

5. THE LAST LAYER SHOULD BE PAPER TOWEL.



6. NEXT, PAINT, COSTUME, ADD FEET, HANDS,

AND CONTROLS.

concerned with each of these methods and shall also discuss the controls and costume for the hand puppet, rod puppet, and string marionette.

Making and designing a puppet are on-going-processes. That is, they are so interrelated a good understanding of one is necessary before tackling the other. For our purposes, however, design shall come first and then construction.

Most puppets are made from molds, either male or female, to which, or in which, another substance such as paper-mache is applied. When the substance applied hardens it becomes the puppet's head, hands, or feet according to the design intended. The male mold is a built up clay model on which is applied a substance to the exterior of the model. A female mold is usually a plaster or plastic mold inside which a substance, such as paper-mache, clay, or plastic wood is applied. Female molds are usually made from male molds. Another type of construction is a built up or add on method. In this method the puppet head starts with a light-weight hollow ball or styrofoam ball to which is added paper-mache features, nose and ears. The next method of construction is to carve features from a solid substance such as balsawood or styrofoam. The last method we shall consider involves cloth cut from a pattern and sewed together to make a puppet.

Paper-mache is probably the most popular method of puppet construction used in the public schools today. Paper-mache

is popular mainly because of its low cost. Most paper-mache puppets start with a male mold, modeled by the artist, to which is added paper-mache on the exterior of the plastic clay model. This paper-mache is usually a layer of small torn bits of newspaper which has been dipped in wheat paste. The layer of newspaper is alternated with a similar layer of butcher paper. By alternating the paper layers the artist may tell what areas he has covered and what areas he has not, thus eliminating any weak spots in the construction. A good paper-mache construction will require about six layers before cutting. Since the paper-mache is added to the outside of a plastic-clay model it is necessary to remove the clay inside the paper-mache shell by either digging the clay out or by cutting the shell and then putting it back together with more paper-mache. Digging the clay out in most cases is nearly impossible so the method most often used is cutting the shell and putting it back together. This requires the gluing of the two halves together and then covering the shell with four more layers. The final layer should be made from bits of paper towels. This will give a smooth surface which will take paint easily. You may paint this surface with tempra paint and spray with clear lacquer, or paint it with acrylic paint. Fake fur or yarn may be glued to the surface to represent hair, while eyes and other features may be painted on the puppet.

Plastic wood construction is usually a female mold type of construction. In this case the artist makes a male mold of clay and then pours plaster around this form to obtain a two piece mold. The plaster is added after placing strips of metal or lids of cans across the top and sides of the clay model in a straight line so when the plaster is added there will be clearly two halves. These two plaster halves make a female mold in which you can construct your puppets head, or any other part fashioned of clay. Make a lather of green soap and water and then brush this inside the mold. Repeat this process several times, allowing time to dry between each brushing, then put the mold back together and bind it securely. The next step is to press plastic wood about ½" thick inside the mold and allow it to dry. As the plastic wood dries it will shrink and pull away from the plaster mold. You may then take the mold apart and paint or decorate your puppet.

Wood construction usually starts with a side view of the head of the puppet traced onto the side of a solid balsawood block or a block composed of several blocks of wood glued together for the desired thickness. Using a band saw, or jig saw, carefully cut the profile of the character out. Next, using a good carving knife, whittle out the desired shape. Sand the surface of the head into a finished smooth surface. Next paint the head with enamel paint of the flesh color desired and when dry, add the other details with

acrylic paint. If your wooden puppet is a string marionette, the parts may be hooked together using hook and eye screws. All parts of the body may be cut out of wood using the method described above.

Ceramic puppets are made usually much like the plastic wood puppets in that they start as a male mold from which is made a two piece plaster female mold. Slip, a liquid clay, is poured into mold and allowed to stand. For best results the mold should be dried in an oven first, allowed to cool, and then strapped together accurately and tightly. The dry plaster will draw the moisture out of the slip inside the mold. Allow it to set until the clay next to the plaster has hardened to a thickness of about ¼ inch, and then pour out the excess slip. Next, let the mold, and slip inside, set for about a day or until the clay shrinks and pulls away from the mold. Remove the ceramic head or hands carefully and trim the unwanted clay. Allow the object to dry for about a week or two and then fire in a kiln to a cone 05 temperature or about 1950° fahrenheit. When the ceramic object is cool you may choose to purchase an 05 glaze to cover the surface of the object and fire it again at cone 05, or you may choose to paint the ceramic object with acrylic or enamel paint. If you choose to paint it with acrylic or enamel paint it should not be fired again. Joining the ceramic parts to the costume may be done with a good glue or you may add holes to the clay object after you have taken

it out of the mold and before you have fired it in the kiln.

A rubber puppet is made from liquid rubber applied to a male clay mold. Liquid rubber may be purchased at most craft shops and comes in different colors, which helps considerably because paint does not work too well on it. Once you have modeled your clay model, then apply 15 to 20 layers of liquid rubber to the form. White liquid rubber will turn a tan color which is a good skin tone. Pink liquid rubber will turn a bright red which is a good color for inside the mouth. It is best to apply the liquid rubber by finger or by using a cheap brush. The liquid rubber tends to cake up in brushes and ruin them. It is essential to apply the coats smoothly. A folded piece of cardboard may be laminated between layers in the mouth and other thin areas such as the ears of a mouse. Allow the rubber to dry before applying the next coat. This process is also good for making masks. When the coats of rubber are thick enough then pull it off the mold like a rubber glove. You may find it necessary to stuff with rags or cotton to maintain its form. Acrylic paint and cosmetics may be used for the final touches.

Cloth and fake fur puppets are puppets cut from a pattern and sewed together to make a puppet of all cloth and or fake fur. Your local sewing center has many patterns from which to choose.

The hand puppet body is simply a "T" shaped shirt draped over the puppeteers hand. The "T" shape allows space

for the fingers of the puppeteer to operate the head and two hands. It is usually best to sew into the costume small cloth mittens instead of adding paper-mache hands, but either method may be used.

The rod puppet costume is similar to the hand puppet but instead of short arms the rod puppet has long arms and the hands of the puppet are quite different. The hands of the rod puppet may be small stuffed golves, paper-mache hands, or wooden hands. The thing which really makes the rod puppet different from the hand puppet is its control rods attached to the hands and the usual flexible jaw of the rod puppet which allows the puppeteer to move the puppets mouth with one hand inside the puppet and operate the hands of the puppet with the rods held in the other hand of the puppeteer. The rods may be attached in a number of ways. We found one heavy steel wire looped at the bottom and attached on each end to the hands gave us good control with very little practice necessary for the puppeteer. I have seen other rod controls such as two rods each of which may be operated independently, which with a little practice work well. These rods may be attached loosely by using fishing tackle, or attached firmly according to your design needs. Some puppets of this type use two operators, one of which operates the hands. Some puppets of this type have one dead arm and hand, a stuffed arm and a hand which does not move, which allows the puppeteer to substitute his own arm and hand as a part of

the puppet costume. When this is done the puppet usually has large glove hands.

The string marionette's body may be an oval cracker box or some such light object to which the costume and parts of the body may be easily attached. The string marionette seems to operate better if the parts are loose and free to move about. We found that by using the cracker box inside a costume we could sew the parts of the body loosely to the box and tightly to the costume. This meant we didn't need a complete paper-mache body. The head needed only a neck, and the hands needed only a short cardboard arm, and the feet needed cardboard legs only as long as necessary to attach to the costume or body. Catfish line proved to be strong enough to hold these parts securely.

Stringing the marionette is a simple but time consuming task. The control rods necessary are one straight stick about 20 inches long and the main control, 10" by 8", which is shaped like an "I", the middle part of which is to be gripped in the hand, and the projections are for arm-hand controls in the front (head controls in the middle), and shoulder controls on the back. These controls should be painted black before stringing. In stringing the marionette, you should start with the two shoulder control strings. Be sure to hold the control at a comfortable level from the floor and attach the black strings from the shoulders or back of the puppet to the part of the "I" control closest to you. Next, attach the head control strings from the head of the puppet

on each side to the middle of the "I" control. The next step is to string the hands to the front part of the "I" control. It is best to pull these up a little so the hands are slightly raised and pulled to the front. Now, the long bar is layed on top of the "I" control and the feet are attached to the correspond ends of the long bar. The feet should also be pulled slightly foreward. This will give much better control during the operation of the marrionette. By holding the long bar in your left hand and rocking it back and forth you can make the marrionette walk. The "I" control should be held in the right hand. The "I" control bar supports the weight of the puppet and controls all other movements. By manipulating the long bar in under the hand strings, movement of the arms and hands may be accomplished easily. With a little practice you will be surprised what your marrionette can do.

IX. How Do You Organize Everything?

By now you have probably a fairly good understanding of what puppetry is all about and now you are ready to get things going. The organizing of a puppet production usually starts with the director discussing with the puppeteers his ideas on the theme of the puppet play and then developing a script. Once the script has been developed a list of puppet actors may be distributed to the puppeteers from which the puppeteer-artists may choose to make. The director at this point should again

discuss the play thouroughly with the puppeteers and work together to arrive at a puppet design which fits into the overall needs of the play.

Perhaps even before these selections are made the decision as to when and where the show is to be put on should be made. Time and dates should be scheduled where ever you intend to put the show on. Be sure to allow enough time to get ready, at least eight weeks, and enough time to perform before going to the next school (At least one hour if your show is 20 minutes long).

After the selections of the puppets are made then the design stage begins. Be sure before hand to have enough materials on hand or you might run into problems at this stage. You may feel some artists may not be able to give the desired results, if so, encourage them to trade puppet selections with another or encourage several artists to work together to achieve better results. A lack of understanding of the objectives and intentions may result in a lack of communication between the director and the artists. Talk to them!

Some artists will be needed for scenery while other artists may make more than one puppet. Be sure the artists know what kind of scenery is needed and how it is to be constructed.

Once the puppets have been designed the next stage is constructing the plastic clay models. The three dimensional models are your last opportunity to make changes in the basic

form of the puppets. Be sure that each puppet conforms to your master plan. If the clay puppets are suitable then proceed to the actual construction.

A dead-line for the puppet construction should be placed on your calendar to insure all construction work will come together at the desired time. It is best to require the puppets to be finished and costumed three weeks before the performances. This schedule allows one week for the design, two weeks for the clay model, and two weeks for construction and costuming. The remainder of the time is for the puppet play practice. Sometime, during the construction the director should pull together enough actors to make the tape recording to be used for the puppet play. Records may be used for background music on the tape.

The practice sessions may at first be only bits and pieces of the total play. It usually takes several practice sessions before the puppeteers will know, even with scripts, how and when to enter their puppets. It is during this time the director should stop and start the recording to insist things are done right. As the practice sessions increase the puppeteers should be more confident of their roles. The single-most-greatest problem at this stage is to get the puppeteers to exaggerate the puppet movements and to develop meaningful movement. The director must take charge! As the practice sessions increase the puppet play practice should soon be uninterrupted except by voice commands of the director. It is

during these sessions the spot light operator should actually set up his equipment and spot the characters according to the directors instructions. Other people such as the stage crew, the sound operator, and curtain operator should practice and be aware of their parts also. If there are any live actors involved they, too, should practice as a part of the puppet play practice. Finally, a dress rehearsal should get the show ready to go on the road or to perform.

X. What Problems Do You Face In Putting It On?

There are many problems to be faced in putting on a puppet play. If you are fortunate enough to have a theater where your audience comes to you then the only major problem is transportation of the audience to your theater, however, if you take your show on the road your problems will be increased drastically. With puppetry on the road many schools will insist upon the puppeteers being transported by school bus. All materials and students can be transported by bus but it is more desirable to also have a pickup or van to transport the scenery, stages, spotlight, and recording equipment. When going to various schools, the stage crew can arrive earlier than the puppeteers if they have their own transportation. In this manner, the stage crew can set up the stages, scenery and other equipment, so that when the puppeteers arrive all they must do is to walk in and get set to put the show on.

It is very important to point out to the secondary school students that smoking and hot-rodding are not allowed, their language and appearance will be scrutinized by the principal, teachers, and student. Students must be on their best behavior! If students fail to respond to these simple requests the elementary principal may request your group to not return. Your puppet show is there simply because these educators feel the show is of some good benefit for their students. If for any reason, one of the secondary students is a bad example for the elementary students, it is the principals right to request your puppet group not to return.

The first show is the most difficult. It is for that reason you should pick a favorable first school and if possible limit your first audience to grades one through three. The smaller the age of the children, the less critical they are. After the puppeteers have responded to a live audience the show should get better each performance and run smoothly. Be sure to emphasize to the students not to let the audience see their puppets until their scheduled appearance. The element of surprise is the greatest thing going for your show!

It is probably best to set up the scenery, stages, and equipment for the first performance the day before. Since this is the most difficult performance, to get everything off to a good start, it is best to keep all the loose ends to a minimum. Make sure that each puppeteer and stage hand has a script the day of the show!

If you are charging admission to the show be sure to designate one person responsible for collecting the money and be sure that person has a suitable bag to hold all the change. It has been my experience that better relations may be maintained if you share a portion of your collections with the schools who allow you to use their facilities and who usually collect the admission for you also. In doing this you help to insure future performances and maintain a good relationship with those who support you.

Be sure that each puppeteer knows he is responsible for his own puppets, but just to make sure check closely after each performance to see that none are left behind. Because some people may be ill or unable to show up on the day of the performance it is usually best to have a few extra people along. These people should have attended all practice sessions and should have on occassions actually worked some of the puppets and marionettes. The director should be in the audience to observe any needed changes and if necessary relate these changes to the puppeteers during the actual performance. It may be necessary to have someone near the director to send behind the stage to relate the directors wishes to the puppeteers.

As the performances increase there will be problems to arise. Usually there will be some repairs to make on the puppets. For this reason you should be sure to include a repair kit of scissors, string, glue, and tape. It also

would be desirable to have a back up light in case your spot light were to go out.

Finally, be sure to decide where and when your puppeteers will have lunch and notify the eating establishment in advance of how many people they will have to serve and when, and if possible turn the orders into them in advance.

Your day will be fun packed, hard work, and an enjoyable experience. It will be the end results of weeks of preparation and careful attention to details. It should be an experience to cherish for a life time.

XI. Concluding Comments On Puppetry

Puppetry is a rather unique experience in that it draws people together in a variety of media to accomplish a single goal—To Entertain. It seems to me that children need time to be children and a pause to escape the pressures of this world now and then must be good for the soul. Children who are happy are much easier to teach than those who feel life has nothing pleasurable to offer.

Over the years I have not only observed the interest of elementary children in the construction and art of the puppets but those secondary students who served as puppeteers developed a better attitude, a greater respect, and an appreciation for puppetry as an art form.

One of the most unexpected aspects or side effects of the puppet production was a cohesiveness within the secondary puppeteer group. One girl summed it up this way, "Before we started on this show hardly any one in the class would

speak to me, but now everyone is so friendly and I have made some very close friends."

Chapter Objectives

I. Introduction

1. To make the student aware of the need for a planned puppet production.
2. To make the student aware of the puppet show as a money making project.

II. What Is A Puppet? Puppeteer? Puppet Show?

1. To adequately define for the student what constitutes a puppet.
2. To make the student aware of what a puppeteer is.
3. To make the student aware of the difference between a puppet show and the puppet play.

III. Different Kinds of Puppets.

1. To develop an awareness, in the student, of the various types of puppets available to him.
2. To adequately point out to the student the characteristics and use of each type of puppet mentioned.

IV. Where Do We Begin?

1. To develop an awareness, in the student, of the basic concepts and approaches to a puppet production.
2. To make the student aware of factors important to the success of the puppet play.
3. To develop an awareness, in the student, of the puppet play themes.

4. To develop an awareness, in the student, of factors important to decision-making of a puppet play.

V. How Do You Write A Puppet Play Script?

1. To develop an awareness, in the student of factors in writing a puppet play script.
2. To develop, in the student, an awareness of staging problems.
3. To give the student a workable format for consideration in his script design.
4. To impress upon the student the importance of a good script.

VI. How Do You Stage a Puppet Play?

1. To develop an awareness, in the student, of the various types of stages and methods available to him.
2. To impress upon the student the economic limits of various types of productions.
3. To impress upon the student the problems and good points of various staging techniques.
4. To develop an awareness, in the student, of stage construction methods.
5. To develop, in the student, an awareness of the need of multiple stages.

VII. How Do You Design a Puppet?

1. To develop, in the student, an awareness of various types of characterization.

2. To develop an awareness, in the student, of the importance of the puppet design.
3. To develop an awareness, in the student, of resources available to him in designing his puppet.
4. To develop, in the student, an awareness of how to simplify and exaggerate lines for better design.
5. To develop, in the student, an awareness of the need for personalization of each puppet character.
6. To develop, in the student, an awareness of the need for colorful costumes.

VIII. How Do You Make A Puppet?

1. To familarize the student with various techniques of constructing puppets.
2. To impress upon the student the design needs as related to the type of construction.
3. To develop an awareness, in the student, of the materials needed to complete the various construction techniques.
4. To develop an awareness, in the student, of the various controls needed for a variety of puppets.

IX. How Do You Organize Everything?

1. To develop an awareness, in the student, of the role of the director.
2. To give the student ideas on how to work with a group in organizing the puppet production.

3. To develop an awareness, in the student, of the time element needed for construction and presentation.
4. To develop an awareness, in the student, of the necessity of having materials on time when they are needed.
5. To develop an awareness, in the student, of the necessity of scenery artists.
6. To develop an awareness, in the student, of the stages of production.
7. To develop an awareness, in the student, of the need for production dead-lines.
8. To develop an awareness, in the student, of the problems associated with practice sessions of the puppet play.

X. What Problems Do You Face in Putting It On?

1. To develop an awareness, in the student, of the transportation problems.
2. To develop an awareness, in the student, of the need for good appearances around elementary schools.
3. To develop an awareness, in the student, of the problems associated with the first performance.
4. To develop an awareness, in the student, of the need for a stage crew.
5. To develop an awareness, in the student, of the puppeteer's responsibilities.

6. To develop an awareness, in the student, of the need for a repair kit.
7. To develop an awareness, in the student, of the need to plan the day carefully.

XI. Concluding Comments on Puppetry.

1. To point out, to the student, the need for puppetry in their lives.
2. To point out, to the student, the possible effects of puppetry.

Chapter Review Questions

I. Introduction

1. What makes a good puppet show?
2. For what extra benefit may puppetry be used?

II. What Is A Puppet? Puppeteer? Puppet Show?

1. Define a puppeteer.
2. What conclusion is drawn about the definition of a puppet?
3. What is a puppet?
4. Define a puppet show.
5. Define a puppet play.

III. Different Kinds of Puppets

1. Name the five groups of puppets.
2. Define each group and give an example of each.

IV. Where Do We Begin

1. How does a puppet production begin?
2. What questions must be answered before starting on the script?
3. According to the author, puppetry works best when directed to whom?
4. Why do secondary students perform well for elementary students but not for their peers?
5. If you decide to do a puppet show for secondary students how should you go about it?

6. For what purposes may puppets be used?
7. What type of puppets should be involved in a dramatic serious puppet show?
8. An entertaining show is limited only by what elements?
9. What are the two most important ingredients of a puppet play?

V. How Do You Write A Puppet Play Script?

1. To what is writing a puppet show script similar?
2. What is meant by the limits of a puppets actions?
3. What type of script needs little instructions or timing controls?
4. If a tape recording is used what elements must be identified?
5. What is the absolute time limit a puppet should occupy the spot light at one time?
6. How may you avoid the problems of the puppeteers moving about?
7. Outline the format for puppet production suggested by the author.
8. What is the final blue-print for the production?
9. What information should be included in the script?
10. Once the script is completed, what should be done with it?

VI. How Do You Stage A Puppet Play?

1. What dictates stages and props?
2. How may a simple classroom stage be constructed?

3. How may a larger stage be constructed?
4. What does it mean to go "on the road"?
5. Describe the plywood stage as presented by the author.
6. How may stages be built using plastic pipe?
7. Describe the staging techniques mentioned by the author in the large productions.
8. Describe how to build hand and rod puppet stages.
9. For what may a small stage in front of the school stage be used?
10. How did the author suggest you think of your theater?

VII. How Do You Design A Puppet?

1. Upon what does puppet design depend?
2. What is basically the design of most puppets?
3. What is the first step in puppet design?
4. What methods may be used to develop the puppet design?
5. Why must you review briefly the puppet script?
6. Describe the "cute type" of puppet design.
7. Describe the "hero-heroine type" of puppet design.
8. Describe the "villain" type of puppet design.
9. Where may you find ideas and costumes for your designs?
10. Once you have determined your puppet design what two things should you do.
11. How may each puppet be made an individual?

12. Having completed your pencil design what is the next thing of importance?

VII. How Do You Make A Puppet?

1. Name seven methods of puppet construction.
2. What is a male mold?
3. What is a female mold?
4. What is the most popular method of puppet construction in the schools today?
5. Why is this method popular?
6. Describe each of the seven methods of construction in detail.
7. Describe the costume for hand puppets.
8. Describe the rod puppet costume and controls.
9. Describe the marionette's body construction and costume.
10. Describe the controls for a marionette and how to string a marionette.
11. What should be done to the marionette controls before stringing?

IX. How Do You Organize Everything?

1. How does the organizing of a puppet production start?
2. Once the script has been developed what should be done next?
3. When should you schedule your show?

4. When do you start the puppet designs?
5. What should be done if some artists are not able to handle their designs?
6. How may the director communicate his objectives and intentions?
7. What should scenery artists know?
8. What happens after the design stage?
9. Describe the schedule for the puppet production and tell how many weeks required for each.
10. Describe the practice sessions.

X. <u>What Problems Do You Face In Putting It On?</u>

1. If you have your own theater what is the major problem to be faced?
2. With puppet shows on-the-road how should the students and scenery be transported?
3. Why should the stage crew arrive early?
4. What student attitudes and traits may cause a problem at the elementary schools?
5. What may be done to help the first performance to get off to a good start?
6. Why should the puppets not be seen by the audience in advance?
7. Why is it best to set up the scenery for the first performance in advance?
8. What should be done in the collecting of admission?
9. What are the responsibilities of the puppeteers in relationship to their puppets?

10. Why should a repair kit be taken along?

11. When should you plan your dinner?

XI. Concluding Comments On Puppetry

1. What real good does puppetry do?

2. What are some of the possible effects of Puppetry?